



## IN MEMORIAM

Sergio Ciani  
Professor of Physiology, Emeritus  
Los Angeles  
1937–2003

No one who knew Sergio even casually could imagine him without music. For those of us fortunate enough to know him better, it was apparent that music lived within him and was the subject most likely to initiate lively conversation. He was both a connoisseur and grateful student. He played the piano quietly and beautifully, always stopping when a listener's presence was detected. This he did partly out of shyness and embarrassment, but mostly with the intention of not bothering his audience. His humility and often-exaggerated respect for others are qualities that helped to define this quietly exemplary man. He was a friend to several artists and classical musicians of great quality. Together they enjoyed discussing and analyzing the intimate details of various performances and pieces of music. He was open-minded however, and once accompanied his teenage son to a Judas Priest concert. Days later, when his hearing returned, he confessed his enjoyment of the experience and even cited a particular number which he claimed as his favorite.

Sergio was an avid reader of literature; his office, home, desk, and night table were stacked with volumes of books. It seemed there was nothing at which Sergio did not at least take a look. He especially enjoyed history, philosophy, and of course, science.

Some time in the past, Sergio secretly began to write, not with the symbols of quantity or value, but with those subtler metaphors of feeling. What is poetry but the mathematics he loved so well in written form? He clandestinely submitted his work and was published in several collection volumes including Poetry's Elite. He was a distinguished member of the International Society of Poets. For his poem On the Stormy Oregon Coast, Sergio was named the Best Poet of the Year 2000. It perfectly describes the remote area of the Pacific Coast to which Sergio begrudgingly pilgrimage to visit his grandchildren.

Professionally, prior to receiving full professorship at UCLA in 1975, Sergio acquired a Laurea in Physics from the University of Genova, 1000 kilometers from his birthplace in Fiume, Italy. He furthered his studies at the University of Minnesota with an Italian colleague Carlo Terzuolo. He began his scientific career as ricercatore (researcher) at the Laboratorio di Cibernetica e Biofisica at the National Council of Research in Camogli, Italy. He was later sought out by George Eisenman, who recruited him first to the University of Chicago and later UCLA. In 1972, after being granted a position as assistant professor at UCLA, Sergio and his family began their new life in America.

Sergio's scientific field was the biophysics of membrane transport. His collaborations with many well-known experimental physiologists over the years including Antonio Borsellini, George Eisenman, Susumu Hagiwara, and Yoshiaki Kidokoro resulted in ideas that later translated into rigorous quantitative models of cell membrane transport. Sergio was fascinated with the elegance of pure physics and was able to transfer this elegance to his biophysical theories. He equally loved mathematics, and after retiring began writing a book on theoretical mathematics.

Sergio's scientific contributions are respected and well remembered by his colleagues, but for everyone - faculty, students, friends, and family alike - what Sergio is known for best is his wonderfully gentle and empathetic nature. His students, for whom he had unlimited time and whom he treated as though they were family, simply adored him.

It is customary perhaps, in a setting such as this, to reduce a lifetime to a list of professional accomplishments. However, those of us who knew Sergio outside academia could witness where his other enthusiasms lay. His immense knowledge and passion for history, literature, theatre and the arts almost equaled his devotion to science. Sergio was a true gentleman and a scholar, a complex man, slightly eccentric, lovingly awkward, and blessed with the very best of human qualities.

Paolo Ciani  
Sally Krasne